

New Year's Resolutions

Cree leaders reflect on 2015 and share their hopes for 2016

An eloquent and dangerous voice

Remembering respected Native activist John Trudell

Boycott dropped

Cree Nation, Algonquins strike deal with Val-d'Or

Outrage over wasted caribou

Useable meat and body parts left by sport hunters near Chisasibi

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**HEART &
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Bring them home

by Will Nicholls

When then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized to the First Nations Peoples in 2008 for the residential school system, I cast doubt on the sincerity of his words. I still feel that way given the many harmful pieces of legislation his government imposed on us without any consultation.

Now we know that, after his “heartfelt” apology, Harper’s administration obstructed the search for children who died in the residential schools. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which released its final report December 15, specifically identified the deaths of 3,201 children in residential schools, but the report says this data is incomplete. TRC Chair Murray Sinclair said the real number is at minimum 6,000, if not much higher, potentially five times as large.

In Quebec, at least 38 deaths occurred. However, both Indian Affairs and Health Canada destroyed documents that could have shed more light on the extent of the death toll in the early years. Quebec, along with Ontario and Saskatchewan, have yet to turn over provincial records that could help identify children who died in their residential schools.

Many makeshift cemeteries where these children were quickly buried have yet to be located. The TRC report calls for a national program to identify them.

We agree with that recommendation. But it should go further than that. The bodies of all children who did not survive the horrors of residential school – from whatever era – should be returned home to rest among their ancestors and the land from which they came.

I recognize some of the difficulties in this proposal. Yet, other countries (such as the United States and Australia) have done this and passed legislation to ensure repatriation of human remains to their Indigenous peoples. Canada does not have such legislation. It should.

Laws enacted by other countries allow Indigenous peoples to have a say in the final disposition of cultural items and remains. It also provides protection and careful con-

trol over removal of human remains and artifacts belonging to a particular people or culture. They carry criminal penalties for illegal trafficking in human remains and cultural items.



Canada needs to catch up with the rest of the world on this. In British Columbia, the Haida Repatriation Committee, all volunteers, have taken on the responsibility for bringing home the remains of their ancestors, grave materials and ancient Haida treasures from museums and private collections around the world.

“Our ancestors are our relatives and we have a deep connection to them,” reads the committee mission statement. “We are who we are today because of them. We believe that as long as the remains of our ancestors are stored in museums and other unnatural locations far from home, that the souls of these people are wandering and unhappy. Once they are returned to their homeland of Haida Gwaii and are laid to rest with honour, the souls can rest and our communities may heal a bit more.”

And that is precisely why the children who died in the residential schools should be returned home. It is to lay those souls to rest but also to play a part in the healing of First Nations Peoples. When Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologized to the First Nations for the residential school system I felt his words were heartfelt and sincere. He has promised to honour the 94 recommendations of the TRC.

In the end, however, he should also let these child victims of the darkest chapter in Canadian history finally return home.

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photo by
Brendan Forward

Boycott dropped

Cree Nation, Algonquins strike deal with Val-d'Or

by Peter Wheeland

news

As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission delivered its final report in Ottawa Dec. 15, the Cree Nation Government and chiefs of three local Anishnabe and Algonquin communities were joining forces with the city of Val-d'Or in their own "historic" effort to fight abuse and promote healthy coexistence.

The alliance resulted from the public furor that erupted after Radio-Canada's Enquête program aired a report Oct. 22 revealing serious accusations of abuse of Indigenous women by officers of the Val-d'Or Sûreté du Québec police detachment. Five days later, Cree Nation Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come announced the cancellation of community events planned for Val-d'Or.

At the time, Coon Come criticized the city's reaction to the Radio-Canada report, commenting that, "the mayor of Val-d'Or's first

instinct, after the allegations came to light, was to show concern for the image of the town and the potential economic impacts."

"How are we even going to begin to address the issue of racism if the leadership can't admit it exists?" Coon Come asked at the time. "Radical action needed to be taken to get the leadership of Val-d'Or to wake up and admit the real problem. It is only by naming it and facing it that we can then attack it."

But "Val-d'Or has clearly done this," the Grand Chief said Dec. 15, and announced an end to efforts to boycott economic activities there.

"The Cree leadership will no longer be discouraging the organization of events in Val-d'Or."

Coon Come and Val-d'Or mayor Pierre Corbeil went several steps further, revealing a "reconciliation and collaboration" agreement between Val-d'Or, the CNG

and the communities of Lac Simon, Kitcisakik and Abitibiwinni.

The "Val-d'Or Declaration" (see sidebar below) follows closely on the heels of two motions from city council. The first approved joining the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination. The second supported demands by First Nations leaders that Quebec create a provincial inquiry into discrimination and abuse of Indigenous women by public security forces and the judicial administration.

The second resolution, Coon Come told a news conference, "is one of the most important actions of the city." It's the only way, he argued, "that we will get a true understanding of how deep the problem runs and where we are going to have to work very hard to root out and attack the cancerous discrimination that keeps us separated."

The "Val-d'Or Declaration" is an agreement between the city of Val-d'Or, the Cree Nation Government and the Anishnabe and Algonquin communities of Lac Simon, Kitcisakik and Abitibiwinni to:

- Seal our reconciliation and lasting and equitable collaboration;
- Work at improving relations between our communities and members;
- Implement the necessary means to promote coexistence immune to violence, racism and discrimination;
- Promote mutually profitable cultural, social and economic exchanges;
- Mobilize our respective community members, citizens, enterprises, organizations and institutions with a view to achieving the objectives of the present Declaration;
- Invite the Quebec and Canadian governments to adhere to and promote the objectives of the present Declaration;
- Engage to the deployment of a Quebec-wide movement promoting membership to the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and discrimination.

Compounding the pain

With Corbeil by his side, Coon Come didn't mince words over his initial anger with the city's first reaction to the Enquête report. "On October 27, I came here to take issue with the fact that the leadership of Val-d'Or, like many Quebec leaders who continue to do so today, minimized and denied the plight of First Nations women in their communities," he said.

"When you have brave women coming forward with little hope of getting justice in the criminal justice system because their cases are too old or because they are not as credible as those they accuse, it is unacceptable a leader would compound their pain by denying that these abuses even exist or minimizing what has happened to them."

Since then, however, the Grand Chief said the city has made great strides. "The Cree leadership and members of our staff have had many difficult and, at times, emotional meetings with the leadership of Val-d'Or. Through these difficult exchanges, we are now on the same page," he said.

"I am not saying that all our problems are solved. I am not saying that no First Nations women will ever be abused again in Val-d'Or. What I am saying – what we are saying – is that this is our problem and together we will fight it.

Coon Come emphasized that the issue exists in many more communities in Quebec than simply Val-d'Or. "Discussions with fellow chiefs from different regions of the province, like Sept-Îles or Three-Rivers, are telling of how widespread the problem truly is."

But Coon Come said Val-d'Or has regained his respect and even surpassed expectations by taking "real steps toward fighting discrimination and intolerance."

Among the measures he cited were administrative efforts by the city to identify and address discrimination against visible minorities, cultural sensitivity training for leadership and management staff, and convoking local business and community groups to discuss how they can contribute to the fight against bias and inequity.



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EDITORIAL BOARD

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Will Nicholls

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PRODUCTION AND SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR

Joshua Grant

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

L. Stewart, J. Grant,
ndiamon, J. Barde, J. Staniforth,
P. Wheeland, A. German, S. Orr, X. Kataquapit,

PHOTOGRAPHY

L. Stewart, A. German, N. Diamond,
R. Mayer, W. Nicholls, D. Valade

SALES REPRESENTATIVES

Danielle Valade, Lyle Brebner

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

R. Lawson

THANKS TO: Air Creebec

WHERE TO REACH US:

POSTMASTER:

The Nation PRODUCTION OFFICE
4529 CLARK, #403, MONTREAL, QC., H2T 2T3

EDITORIAL & ADS

TEL.: 514-272-3077, FAX: 514-278-9914

The Nation HEAD OFFICE

P.O. BOX 151, CHISASIBI, QC. J0M 1E0

www.nationnews.ca

E-MAIL ADDRESSES:

Editorial: nation@nationnews.ca

news@nationnews.ca

Ads: for Danielle Valade

ads@nationnews.ca

for Lyle Brebner

publicity@nationnews.ca

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Abitibiwinni Chief David Kistabish said that signing the Declaration was an expression of his 600-member community's desire to "maintain harmonious relations with each of the surrounding communities, Native or otherwise. Now that the boil has been lanced, the time for reconciliation has come and we must work together in order to end racism, violence and discrimination."

He said Coon Come “has recognized that the city of Val-d’Or has done its homework,” and that the Declaration is evidence of unprecedented collaboration between Native and settler communities.

Although his city is at the centre of the storm, Corbeil told *the Nation* that the local conflict has broader implications. Echoing Coon Come, he said that “what



The initiatives announced this week are “a precursor to something new,” Corbeil added, and he hopes they will serve as a model in other communities to address endemic racism and discrimination.

[illegible]

The Chairperson and Council of Commissioners,
Director General and Senior Directors of Cree School Board.

De la Présidente, du Conseil de Commissaires,
du Directeur Général et Directeurs Séniors de la Commission Scolaire Crie.

A new relationship

Trudeau promises to improve relations with Indigenous Canadians

by Joel Barde

With many Indigenous leaders calling Stephen Harper the worst prime minister in recent Canadian history, besting his predecessor is a relatively easy task for Canada's newly elected leader.

That said, Justin Trudeau is signalling a willingness to meaningfully address some of the fundamental issues facing Indigenous Canadians – to an extent this country has never seen.

The Liberal government's Throne Speech, delivered December 4, outlined the government's priorities for the next session of Parliament, including a major commitment to addressing Aboriginal issues.

"Because it is both the right thing to do and a certain path to economic growth, the government will undertake to renew, nation-to-nation, the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples,

one based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership," said Governor General David Johnston.

The speech also reiterated the government's commitment to a national inquiry into missing and murdered women. Indigenous groups, of course, have been calling for that for the better part of a decade.

Trudeau's conciliatory approach was also on display at the Assembly of First Nations meeting he attended on December 8 in Gatineau, Quebec.

During the event, Trudeau laid out his five priorities. These include the national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women, significant investment into First Nation education, lifting a cap on funding of First Nations programs, implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission, and looking into repealing legislation unilaterally imposed on Indigenous people by the Harper government.

AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde welcomed the five-point plan and urged Trudeau and the Liberal government to move quickly on their promises. "The First Peoples of Canada have suffered too much, and for too long. Our people have waited in terrible conditions, suffering indignity and going without many of the basic services other Canadians take for granted," Bellegarde told the CBC.

And finally, Trudeau made more encouraging statements December 16 at an event marking the release of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It was charged with investigating Canada's residential school system and collecting testimony from its survivors.



Radio Television Malacañang (RTVM)

The 4,000-page report documents widespread physical and sexual abuse, and how at least 3,000 children perished while in the system.

"Our goal, as we move forward toward together, is clear," Trudeau told AFN delegates. "It is to lift this burden from your shoulders, from those of your families and communities. It is to accept fully our responsibilities and our failings, as a government and as a country."

*May your Christmas be Merry
&
the New Year filled with happiness
from all of us at the Nation*

Attawapiskat teen's body found

Nishnawbe-Aski Police found the body of a missing 13-year-old Attawapiskat girl October 19. Sheridan Hookimaw was found near a local area known as "the first rapids." Friends, family and authorities are awaiting a coroner's report to determine the cause of death.

Hookimaw had been experiencing difficulty in her family and social life. According to a report from APTN, Hookimaw was living in an overcrowded nursing home after a sewage backup in the community forced her and her family to leave their home. The home was subsequently the target of an alleged arson by local youth. One of Sheridan's family members also told

APTN that she was the target of bullying at the school she attended.

Police spokesperson Sergeant Jackie George says that police services provided all of the necessary information to the coroner and a report is expected by the end of this month.

Report highlights safety concerns for Aboriginal women

A Quebec Native Women Inc. report calls on the Quebec government to take serious measures to address the safety of Native women in their jurisdiction. According to the RCMP, between 1980 and 2012 there were at least 46 homicides involving Native women in Quebec.

Consisting of 18 months of personal testimonials from Indigenous communities throughout Quebec, the report highlights the cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in the province. QNW President Viviane Michel says their recommendations will be published in January.

"Many of us are born into violence, some carried in violence inside their mother's womb and some are raised in violence," said Mohawk Cheryl McDonald at a news conference in Kahnawake held to release the report.

“This is at the heart of why our women are missing – we no longer know who we are in this world in 2015 – although many of us are returning to that life, those values, those traditions and those beliefs.”



*Peace, love, health and prosperity
for the New Year 2016.*

[illegible]

**From Chief and Council and all
members of Moose Cree First Nation.**

The report suggests there is a code of silence in Aboriginal communities, where fear and shame prevent many women from seeking help. It also notes that profiling of and discrimination against Aboriginals by police as well as certain behaviours exhibited by authorities discourage Native women from reporting violence.

Assembly of First Nations for Quebec and Labrador Chief Ghislain Picard stressed the importance of involving Aboriginal men in the process of addressing issues of violence and says it is something that has been discussed in recent meetings concerning the Val-d'Or crisis.

"Given that the majority of Aboriginal leaders are men, I think this awareness is necessary," Picard said.

The report identifies a need for the creation of violence-prevention strategies and better support and intervention when violence occurs. It also notes that much of the violence faced by Native women is institutional, contrary to the govern-

ment's perception that most cases are conjugal or domestic.

TV program asking for stories from Indigenous children

Award-winning educational producer Apartment 11 Productions is looking for story submissions from First Nations, Métis and Inuit children ages 8-12. Participants will be featured on a Canadian television series.

Apartment 11 produces programs for TVOntario and CBC and is developing a series in which

Indigenous children from across Canada share stories about their lives and culture and things that are important to them as individuals.

Whether it is sharing individual dreams and aspirations, engaging in traditional activities such as family hunting or fishing adventures, or simply a humorous tale - we want to hear your story.

Video submissions can be sent to ramelle@apartment11.tv by Friday, January 15, 2016. E-mails and photographs are also acceptable.

Those looking for more information on Apartment 11 Productions can visit www.apartment11.tv.



Charlie Angus NDP
@CharlieAngusNDP

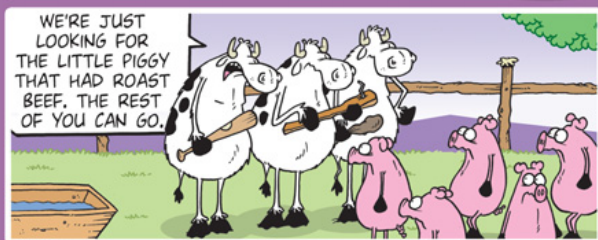
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Heartbroken over loss of Sheridan Hookimaw. I pray for her and for a nation that squanders potential of so many.

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10-25



Outrage over wasted caribou

Useable meat and body parts left by sport hunters near Chisasibi

by Joshua Grant

"Oh my gosh, it was a complete disgrace," said Nadia Saganash, describing her initial reaction to photos of caribou carcasses left to rot along the highway near Chisasibi. "It's hard to look at, especially for Elders and community members; these are edible and consumable parts."

Saganash is the Wildlife Management Administrator of the Cree Nation Government (CNG). Unfortunately, she says, the carelessness shown by sport hunters in Zone 22-B of northern Quebec isn't new, just more evidence of an ongoing problem.

The carcasses were discovered earlier this month when Chisasibi resident Roger Orr was heading out to hunt, coming across the remains of about 10 caribou near the Sashaw Sibi access road. Heads, spines, ribs, legs and

some less desirable pieces littered the roadside and a nearby parking lot. Only the prime meat had been stripped from the animals.

As caribou herds decline across Quebec, pictures of the wasted carcasses that Orr posted on Facebook sparked outrage across Eeyou Istchee.

It isn't entirely clear who is responsible for the mess, but both Orr and Saganash have their suspicions. Saganash noted that while the CNG isn't sure whether the culprits are poachers or sport hunters, they suspect the waste may have come from Ontarians who legally cannot import certain animal parts into their home province.

Orr's assessment of the waste was clear. "It was all hunters from the south who were parked there," said Orr.

RESPONSE OF Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come

The Cree Nation Government/Grand Council of the Crees was well informed of the wastage and security incidents occurring along the Chisasibi road at the opening of the sport-hunting season. This is a situation that has been reoccurring for far too long. Year after year, since the opening of the winter sports hunt, we have brought this issue to the attention of the Quebec government, and yet very little actions or measures have been taken to respond to the matter.

It is a complete disgrace to see body parts and whole carcasses left on the land to waste. This will no longer be tolerated. Wastage of any animal or animal parts is contradictory to the customs and values of Cree traditions. Certain animal parts, such as the head and limbs, are constantly discarded by sports hunters, but these are consumable and usable parts for the Crees. For our members, especially our Elders, to witness such waste is very disturbing and disrespectful

to both the animal and our customs. As tradition dictates, a hunter (whether Cree or non-Cree) must not waste any parts of the animal. This is what our Nation must stand by. Anyone coming into the territory is expected to respect the land and its people.

We have been in contact with the Quebec Wildlife Protection Office and the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Coordination Committee (HFTCC) to report the incidents and are taking nec-



"They were all parked near the hydro line, there were a lot of skidoo tracks and the caribou remains were piled in plain sight."

While Orr admitted that it's difficult to always use every last bit of animal remains, he says that Cree hunters have a different approach to hunting.

"It's not Cree," he said. "There's a big difference in the style of it. It's definitely not cultural practice to do that kind of butchering. Our way is sustainable. We replenish the resources so future generations can survive. If one understands the spirit of in'do'houin, it's not about pulling the trigger, it's about why you pull the trigger, why you're killing the animal."

There is a spiritual aspect to every kill, Orr continued. "It allows you to harvest a bounty so that you can continue to feed your family, your children, your people. By showing respect it always ensures your safety. Once you start taking for no meaning other than entertainment, that spirit is aware of that and makes it harder for one to harvest."

"It's unacceptable and it won't be tolerated," said Saganash. "We've brought this issue up to the Hunting Fishing and Trapping Coordinating Committee (HFTCC) and the Quebec government and we're taking actions with the outfitters to see that they implement some measures to ensure this doesn't happen again."

Saganash noted that Area 22-B has become a hot spot for hunters. As the nearby herd migrates closer to the community the outfitting companies in the area are sending more clients to this zone.

"Not all of the sport hunters are guided," she said, "but most of these outfitters have been sending hunters into a small portion of that territory. That's where the sport hunters are concentrated because that's where the caribou are. There have been ongoing security issues and the hunters there have left their mark."

essary measures to prevent any future occurrences. The Wildlife Protection Office has reassured us that there will be adequate resources patrolling the area throughout the sport hunt season. We have also been in contact with the outfitter to address the matter. It was brought to our attention that the outfitters immediately cleaned up the site. We would like to express our appreciation towards their immediate response. However, the issues are not completely resolved and we fear

these incidents may occur again. We are seeking further collaboration from outfitters, the Quebec Wildlife Protection Office and HFTCC to implement interim measures to help prevent these unacceptable incidents. These measures are presently in discussion.

We urge the Quebec government to act diligently on this matter. The conduct of some sport hunters is unacceptable and the inability of Quebec government to properly manage this hunt over the

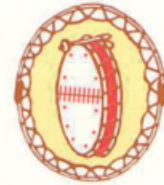
years forces us to call for the complete closure of the winter sports hunt in 2017-18. This is imperative given the recorded continued decline of the Leaf River Herd. To prevent the same fate as the George River Herd where a drastic population decline is threatening their existence, measures will be required to alleviate pressures on the Leaf River Herd. This request is in respect to the Priority of Native Hunting as provided for in Section 24.6 of the JBNQA.



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Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)
Grand Conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee)

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Cree Nation Government
Gouvernement de la Nation Crie



C. N. G.
G. N. C.
est. 1978

By Email: pierre.corbeil@ville.valdor.qc.ca

December 9, 2015

Mr. Pierre Corbeil, Mayor
Ville de Val d'Or
855, 2e Avenue, C.P. 400
Val d'Or, QC J9P 4P4

Dear Mr. Corbeil,

During a press conference following the grisly details of Radio-Canada's Enquête investigative program, I promised to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with anyone willing to denounce racism and discrimination.

With the adoption of two resolutions during a Val d'Or City Council meeting on December 8th, you have proven your willingness to stop and listen, to hear a demand for justice, and help bring a much needed wind of change. We thank you for recognizing this pivotal moment in history and seizing the opportunity.

The James Bay Cree have always had a link to Val d'Or, be it friendly or business-oriented. All relationships are important and must be treated equally, be it friendly or business-oriented.

The two resolutions adopted by your Council are exemplary on how nation-to-nation relationships and lending support to your neighbors should be modeled.

The James Bay Cree Nation thanks the City of Val d'Or for their support. As promised, we will be available to work alongside you as new support systems and programs to counter discrimination and racism are implemented within your municipality's structure. These initiatives will send a strong message of inclusion. We remain confident that your actions will be a catalyst for change for other cities and towns wanting to characterize the diversity of their population as a strength.

Kind regards,

Dr. Matthew Coon Come
Grand Chief

c.c. Municipal Council Members

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Saganash says the Cree Nation Government is in contact with wildlife protection, the fishing and trapping association and the local outfitting companies, and has asked the outfitters to clean up the site. She says that the two sites were cleaned up but that more work needs to be done to prevent this type of behaviour.

"We want to make sure these incidents don't occur again over this [hunting] season and that more regulations and stricter measures are put in place for next season," she said. "It's hard to change the regulations right now so we're seeking collaboration from the outfitters to make sure they don't send all of their clients to the same area. We're proposing that the sport hunters bring back the whole caribou and that the outfitters manage the quartering and carving of the carcasses themselves."

Other potential solutions include a hunting corridor along the Chisasibi road, reducing the amount of hunting permits given out each year, unifying zones 22-A and 22-B to distribute hunters more evenly and potentially even closing the hunting area entirely.

However, Saganash said there are simply not enough game wardens to cover such a large area.

"There's a lot of awareness that needs to be created by the wildlife protection officers and the outfitters themselves, evidently there hasn't been enough. We've been struggling with wildlife protection in the territory because they're under-resourced. We have such a big territory and anything can happen."

In response to the concerns of the CNG, Saganash says that Quebec's Wildlife Protection Office has committed to have six officers permanently patrolling the area around Chisasibi for the remainder of the sport-hunting season. The CNG also set up a conference call with the four outfitting companies in the area to discuss measures to be taken immediately to avoid similar incidents.

"The caribou can't speak for themselves," declared Orr. "Somebody has to speak for them. All it takes is a few pictures posted and you create that awareness that pushes the representatives and the people in charge to see what they can do."



"The caribou can't speak for themselves," declared Roger Orr, "somebody has to speak for them. All it takes is a few pictures posted and you create that awareness that pushes the representatives and the people in charge to see what they can do."





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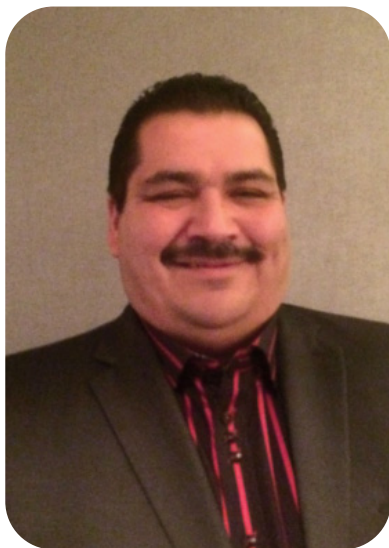
Looking back to see the way forward

Cree leaders reflect on 2015 and share their hopes for 2016

by Amy German

As years go, 2015 was a big one. Highlights included the 40th anniversary of the creation of the Grand Council of the Cree and the election of Justin Trudeau as Prime Minister. But there were also low points like the Val-d'Or scandal, when it was revealed that a large number of Aboriginal women had been subjected to police violence and sexual assault.

Several Cree leaders participated in *the Nation's* annual New Year's Resolution Guide to share their successes, cherished moments and low points with readers across Eeyou Istchee.



Robert Baribeau
President/CEO
Cree Construction & Development
Company and Gestion ADC

Another year has come and gone already and we are getting ready to celebrate the holiday season with our families and friends.

Wow, right? I feel as I get older that the days, months go by in an instant. This year has been a good year for our companies: the Cree Construction and Development Company and Gestion ADC. We have great clients and great partners whom we truly appreciate!

My highlight of the year has to be the fact that our joint venture with the Nemaska Development Corporation – the Nemaska Eenou Company celebrated its 25th anniversary. I want to take this opportunity

to thank all the people who have been part of this great partnership. I want to express on behalf of CCDC all of our thanks for your continued trust and support of our joint venture over the last 25 years! On behalf of the Nemaska Eenou Company, I would like to thank all of our employees and clients.

In Gestion ADC, we also have had an excellent year. Through our partnerships we have ensured a Cree presence for the long term within the mining sector and this will and is creating many well-paid jobs for the Cree Nation.

When I look back on the 15 years since I joined the CCDC, I am so proud of where we are today. And I thank all those who had the vision that we as a Cree Nation would one day become a major force in the development of our territory and our communities. A big thank you to the great people who made the JBNQA a reality for our people!

Although it has been a great year, like in every family, we have lost some family members. We said good-bye to three of our long-time employees. I want to offer my sympathies to their families and also thank them for all their years of service and dedication.

Next year will be a very special year for CCDC and Gestion ADC – CCDC will be celebrating its 40th anniversary and Gestion ADC will be celebrating its 20th anniversary. I really believe that this success and long history is owed to all those who have been our leaders like the Board of Compensation and Creeco for always keeping faith in our companies. And again the real heroes in my eyes are all of our employees who work so hard and relentlessly to ensure our success!

So with this being said I want to wish all of our employees, partners, clients and the entire Cree Nation an awesome holiday season with your friends and loved ones.



Jack Blacksmith
President

CREECO and The Board of Compensation

Watchia,

2015 was a memorable year for myself, as well as the Board of Compensation and the Cree Regional Economic Enterprises Company ("CREECO"). In January 2015, I was back in the office after being re-elected as Chairman for BOC and President of CREECO in mid-December 2014. I was anxious to meet the challenges that I had witnessed as a Board member, and started the year with a staff meeting. Reassuring employees that their jobs are safe is never a fun task, but it had to be done, as many were feeling unsure due to rumours and stories that they had been hearing regarding the future of BOC/CREECO. My most important advice to them was that they were here to serve the Cree Nation and needed to continue on with business as usual.

In the summer of 2015, we received the results of our audits and the results were outstanding with our companies all posting positive results. Net income of \$11.1 million in CREECO is definitely something to be proud of. Air Creebec with its President, Matthew Happyjack, at the helm, and Tanya Pash and their management team, worked hard to build and grow the business through the purchase of three planes during the year. We are very pleased with the Cree Health Board contract, which started in October, and hope that it serves our patients' needs. Travel is tough enough when you're healthy, doubly so when you're fighting illness.

Cree Construction had a good year and several of the joint ventures proved to have strong results. The President, Robert Baribeau, and his team have been working hard to cut costs to avoid having too much overhead. Volume is lower than in the past, but due to stronger cost control, it was a great year.

The Board of Compensation saw its investment portfolio hit all-time highs for the three funds – the market value of the Regular fund (excluding the Insurance portion) was \$111.2 million; the Growth fund (created in 1995 and set aside for 30 years) is at \$72.9 million; and the Cree Collective Deductible Insurance Program fund is at \$14.8 million and is currently being analyzed as to its future.

The Annual General Assembly in Oujé-Bougoumou would have to be a time that I remember with mixed emotions. I was proud to present the results of the Board of Compensation and CREECO, but disappointed in the turn that the Assembly took when it became a personal attack upon my integrity. I feel that it overshadowed the results that we had achieved in 2014-2015, and that wasn't fair to all of the Board of Directors and our dedicated employees who worked extremely hard to generate those returns for the Cree Nation. I tried my best to remain professional and answered the questions that were directed to me.

The Board of Compensation will not stay still and play dead, be it over CREECO and its subsidiaries or against our work with the Insurance Program, which is an attempt to damage our credibility. Our Board members have a duty to protect the funds and we collectively take that responsibility very seriously. We will do our utmost despite the challenges we face, and will continue representing the Cree Nation, managing the funds to the best of our abilities.

In 2016, I plan to continue where 2015 left off, looking for new ways to improve the results whether by analyzing new business opportunities, assisting our management to secure new contracts in our existing companies, or by improving the efficiency of our existing operations. We look forward to attending Local Annual General Assemblies when requested and having our meetings in the Communities of Eeyou Istchee as much as possible.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Board Members, staff, consultants and partners for their dedication and would like to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday. Come back refreshed and continue your good work.



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Bella Petawabano
Chairperson

Cree Board of Health & Social Services of James Bay

The keyword for 2015 was “access”. Access means that it is easier for our patients to get the health and social services they need. At this time last year, Mistissini Eenouch who are on long-term dialysis spent their first Christmas at home, thanks to the opening of the dialysis clinic in that community. In July, we were proud to add medical imaging, including x-ray, to the range of services available in Mistissini. Telemedicine is advancing by leaps and bounds in the Cree Health Board, thanks to the ECN fibre-optic infrastructure. After many years of planning, services ranging from eye exams to ultrasounds to telepsychiatry are being deployed across Eeyou Istchee. In October, we inaugurated the Cree Patient Charter with Air Creebec. The charter provides a comfortable, non-stop flight for patients travelling between Chisasibi Hospital and Val-d’Or and Montreal.

In the spring we mourned the victims of the Bussy Lake fire which claimed the lives of David Jimiken, Emmett Coonishish, Chiiwetin Coonishish, Kevin Loon and Charlie Gunner. This terrible accident devastated the families of several Cree Health Board employees. The Cree Health Board is involved in all of life’s highs and lows. Our frontline workers, everyone from doctors and nurses to CHRs, Homecare and Community Workers, walk with you during many of the crises in your lives.

The October 2015 Enquête documentary about the actions of SQ officers in Val-d’Or was a wake-up call to the whole country about the violence and racism suffered by Indigenous women in that city and in many other places. The CBHSSJB joined the Cree Nation Government and other entities in a moratorium on public events in Val-d’Or. Violence against women is a problem that we can’t ignore when it happens in our own communities.

It was with mixed feelings of sadness and pride that I joined Virginia Wabano at the blessing of the ground of the future Women’s Shelter in Waswanipi in November. A second shelter is being built in Waskaganish. These will be the first women’s shelters in Eeyou Istchee and will provide women and children in danger with a temporary safe haven as well as healing programs and support. The Cree Health Board is proud to be a partner in this initiative with Cree Justice, the CNG, CWEIA and the Cree Nations of Waswanipi and Waskaganish.

I am very happy to announce that we are planning a major regional assembly on health, with the theme: “Shaping the Future, Together”. Tentatively scheduled for April 2016, this will be an opportunity for communities to help chart the path for the Cree Health Board for the next 10 years. We will share details with the Nation and other media, including the location and exact dates of the Assembly, in the coming weeks. Remember that you can always call upon your Community Representative on our Board of Directors. You can also find us online at www.creehealth.org, and on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter using the keyword “Creehealth”.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and all the staff of the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay, we wish you all miyupimaatsiun (wellbeing) and chiyaameihtamuun (living together in harmony) throughout the Christmas season of 2015 and in the New Year 2016.



Violet Pachano
President
Niskamoon Corporation

We wish everyone in Eeyou Istchee Season’s Greetings! May the holiday season bring you all happiness and peace. Best wishes for the New Year 2016!



Abel Bosum
Negotiator, Cree-Quebec Relations
Cree Nation Government

1) What was your biggest high point from 2015

This past year there were high points from the perspective of the work I have been involved in and also high points on a personal level. On the work front, the high points include our finalizing the Baril-Moses Dispute Agreement through which we resolved a long-standing issue with Quebec having to do with the respect for an agreement regarding Cree rights outside the JBNQA territory. We have also been able to advance a couple of IBAs – one for Nemaska related to a lithium mining project, and one for Oujé-Bougoumou related to an iron ore project. In both cases we were able to incorporate into those IBAs what are called “transformation centres” which are basically plants to further process the ores and which will be located outside of the boundaries of Eeyou Istchee, but still central to the mining projects.

I am very honoured to have the opportunity to have been involved in an agreement between the Cree Health Board and our Cree Nation Government to establish women’s shelters in Eeyou Istchee. And, of course, we have continued to make progress in implementing our Governance Agreement with Quebec.

On a more personal level, as most people know, there were elections in Oujé-Bougoumou this past summer and Curtis Bosum, my son, was elected Chief. I cannot describe the pride I feel for Curtis’ achievement. In fact, it really goes much deeper than pride. To see my son developing the maturity and the strength of character to take on one of the most difficult tasks anyone can have in the Cree Nation, and to have been

chosen by the people to carry the torch forward has touched me beyond belief.

To see this in one’s son makes all the work, all the struggles, all the challenges absolutely worth it in a way it is difficult to describe. We often get congratulations for our efforts, and people tell us sometimes how much our efforts are appreciated, but when your own child decides to follow in your footsteps and decides in some way to model themselves after you, well, it just doesn’t get any better than that either as a parent or as a Cree representative. That is the best affirmation anyone could ever ask for, and I am so looking forward to seeing what he will accomplish over the next four years.

2) What was the greatest low point or loss that you/your organization or department?

There is no question in my mind that the low points this past year for me were the passing away of two Cree individuals who were so dedicated to our Cree Nation and so committed to making a contribution to building a stronger Cree Nation. I am referring, of course, to the passing of Lawrence Jimiken and Gerti Murdoch. Each of them, in their own very special way, was an inspiration to so many of us and they were important models to our youth. Whenever there are Cree Nation gatherings I somehow I expect that I will see them there. I will miss them both terribly, as will so many people throughout Eeyou Istchee.

3) What are your goals for the New Year?

My personal goal for the new year, in addition to continuing with some of the work we have done over the past few years, is to focus my efforts on trying to find acceptable and beneficial solutions to the various territorial overlap issues with our Indigenous brothers and sisters in the Innu, Attikamek and Algonquin Nations and with the Inuit. I am confident that our peoples, sitting at a table Indigenous-to-Indigenous, will find creative and harmonious solutions that we can all be proud of and which will work to everyone’s benefit.

I am also looking forward to being involved in getting a new Cree entity off the ground. We have established a Cree Community Foundation, which will

undertake a range of fundraising activities on behalf of the Cree Nation Government. The CNG has just recently been officially recognized by the federal government as a qualified and certified organization for receiving charitable donations. Our new Community Foundation will be used to fundraise for worthy Cree causes including, for example, the ongoing operations of the Aanischaaukaamikw Cree Cultural Institute. This will be an exciting new addition to the Cree Nation's organizational landscape and should produce some very interesting results.

4) *Is there anything else you would like to share?*

It has been my privilege to work with the Cree Nation for nearly four decades. Over this time, I have been witness to the many agreements our leaders have pioneered.

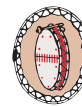
Taken as a whole these agreements have created a new landscape for our Cree Nation and for our communities. Together, the cumulative impact of all our agreements has put the Cree Nation potentially at the centre of economic activities in northern Quebec and created the possibility for us to be the major economic force in the region. These agreements are not just documents, they are tools really. They are tools to achieve our visions. So I would like to encourage everyone, particularly our youth, to study these agreements, to learn what is in them and to learn how to use them.

Our Cree Nation is at a crossroads, and the path we take over the next few years will determine whether the vision of a healthy and prosperous Indigenous Cree Nation will be realized or not. I am optimistic that our people, and especially our youth, will rise to the occasion and take our Cree Nation to new heights and to an even brighter future. And, as we take on these larger challenges I hope that we can also make sure to take care of each other in our communities and in our families so that our journey will be a healthy one.



Department of
Justice and Correctional Services

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Record Suspension Program

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- Were convicted of a criminal offence
- Have completed all the requirements of your sentence and probation
- You have completed the 5 or 10 year waiting period, depending on the nature of the offence

If you are a Cree beneficiary, the Cree Nation Government (CNG) can help you to fill out the record suspension application and if you qualify for financial assistance, the CNG may pay the costs associated with the application.

Need Help on How to Apply?

Contact your Local Community Reintegration Officer:

| | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Chisasibi: | 819-855-2120 |
| Eastmain: | 819-977-2400 |
| Mistissini: | 418-923-2661 |
| Nemaska: | 819-673-2400 |
| Ouje-bougoumou: | 418-745-2260 |
| Waskaganish: | 819-895-2126 |
| Waswanipi: | 819-753-2770 |
| Wemindji: | 819-978-3300 |
| Whapmagoostui: | 819-929-3796 |

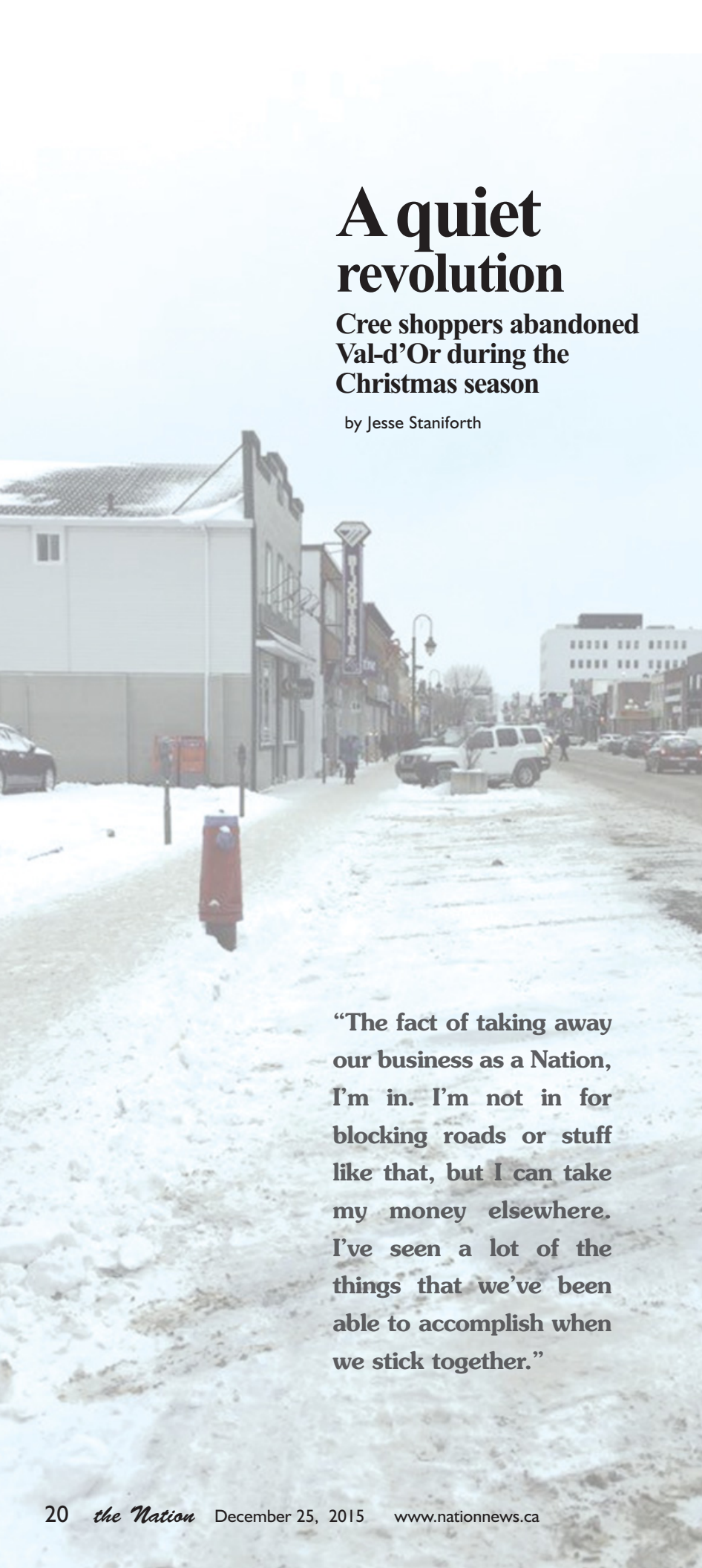
If you have any additional questions or need more information, please contact the Correctional Services Regional Office in Val d'or at 819-874-2600 or by email at justice.valdor@cngov.ca.

www.creejustice.ca

A quiet revolution

Cree shoppers abandoned Val-d'Or during the Christmas season

by Jesse Staniforth



“The fact of taking away our business as a Nation, I’m in. I’m not in for blocking roads or stuff like that, but I can take my money elsewhere. I’ve seen a lot of the things that we’ve been able to accomplish when we stick together.”

As December dawned and Christmas approached, posts on social media showing pictures of the streets of Val-d'Or began to multiply: the streets, reported post after post, were empty. The boycott was working.

The economic impact clearly influenced Val-d'Or municipal council to reach an agreement with nearby Cree, Anishnabe and Algonquin communities aimed at ending the shopping boycott (see story pages 6-7).

There was, to be clear, no official boycott. Yes, the Cree Nation Government suspended trade dealings with companies based in Val-d'Or for an indefinite amount of time in order to respond to what many saw as an unsympathetic response from that community to allegations that eight of Val-d'Or's SQ officers had abused Native women.

Speaking with *the Nation* in late October as the police crisis was still unfolding, Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come underlined, “I never mentioned a ‘boycott,’” and that Crees were free to take their business wherever they wanted, regardless of Cree Nation Government policy.

Still, for Waswanipi entrepreneur Irene Neeposh, it was enough of an example that she was ready to follow suit. Normally, she said, she shops in Val-d'Or. This year, however, she was shopping in Amos and gassing up in Senneterre.

“My position is just to stick by the political decision, even if it's not an official boycott,” she explained. “The fact of taking away our business as a Nation, I’m in. I’m not in for blocking roads or stuff like that, but I can take my money elsewhere. I’ve seen a lot of

the things that we've been able to accomplish when we stick together."

Neeposh isn't simply protesting the SQ's alleged abuses. Instead, she's tired of being treated as a second-class citizen in a community in which Crees provide a significant portion of economic support.

"I don't look that Native," Neeposh said. "But I see the difference if I'm hanging around with Natives. If I walk into a motel to check in, I'll be treated in one way until my Native friend comes up and speaks to me in Cree – then the little card gets pulled, and they say, 'We need a \$200 deposit.' That's one example of how much [discrimination] exists. The media twists the reality of it and undermines the purpose of what Native people are trying to achieve for themselves."

She noted that Val-d'Or is not the only community in which this discrimination takes place – she has seen it in Chibougamau as well.

"I don't mean to make it sound like they're all a bunch of racists," she observed. "But there's a stigma that exists in the town. The fact that they're doing this [means] they'll be able to see that we can coexist, and we should coexist. But the relationship has to be mutual, with a little give and take in all areas. The reason I chose to stand by the political decision of boycotting Val-d'Or was specifically in the hope of improving the existing relationship. These types of movements are non-violent, but send a strong message to the neighbouring community: we're here and we want to coexist with you, but you have to meet us halfway."

Diane Cooper, who oversees Cree language and cultural programs for Waswanipi's cultural centre, agrees.

On Black Friday in Ottawa, she said, "There was a busload of people from Waswanipi and Waskaganish in town doing their shopping at the same time!"

Like Neeposh, it wasn't only the SQ crisis that led her to support the unofficial boycott. Rather, she was tired of being treated as though she was a potential criminal rather than a customer of equal standing with the non-Natives shopping beside her.

"I really did feel unappreciated," she said. "Many times, I went to Val-d'Or for business or for shopping, and felt stereotyped and looked down on. There's a sign over your forehead when you walk around Val-d'Or. You notice by the stares and the way you're treated in businesses."

Cooper says she's baffled why many business owners are not friendlier to their regular Native clients, not greeting them, learning their names, or finding out where they're from.

"How many years have we done business in Val-d'Or?" she demanded. "We should be called part of the community by now. They should know us by name, know where we're from."

Cooper said that before she quit drinking seven years ago, she spent a lot of time in Val-d'Or's bars, where she experienced some nightmarish scenes.

"My friend got raped behind a bar, in one of the alleyways," Cooper remembered. "It was white men drinking in the bar – they gang-raped her. I remember picking her up. She wanted to call the police, but we were so afraid. She kept it a secret for a long time – she was too afraid of what might happen if she pressed charges."

For Cooper, this attitude is part of a much longer dismissal of Indigenous suffering that goes back to residential schools.

"If it was a white girl who was missing [instead of Sindy Ruperthouse], believe me, Val-d'Or would be turned upside down," she said. "With residential schools, kids didn't come home. Nobody reported it. Nobody blinked. Everybody went about their business."

In Ottawa, she says, she's treated well by the staff of the stores in which she shops, and she enjoys the tax exemption in places there for those with status cards. Meanwhile, during a recent visit to a Winners outlet in Val d'Or, she was treated with an unusual friendliness and respect by the staff, an experience she says a Cree friend also had while eating at a St. Hubert restaurant there.

Neeposh, meanwhile, says she needed to meet a person in a shopping mall in Val-d'Or and was shocked to discover herself the only Native in the place. "There is an impact," Neeposh said. "I'm very grateful that it's non-violent, even on social media. It's a good thing."

As for Cooper, she fully backed the Cree decision to cut ties with Val-d'Or businesses over the issue. "When the Crees decide to do something, they're powerful," she said. "In Val-d'Or, they don't realize the power we have. Money holds a lot of power. But a group of people holds a lot of power to make a revolution, to make a big change."

An eloquent and dangerous voice

Remembering respected Native activist John Trudell

by ndiamon



John Trudell

No one can claim that John Trudell led a charmed life. His was an interesting life and he lived it well. How many people have had a song written about them while in the prime of their lives. Who of us has been described as “extremely eloquent, and therefore very dangerous”?

I met Trudell in Los Angeles while working on the documentary *Reel Injun*. It was the morning after Barack Obama was first elected in November 2008. The crew and I were having a meal of Vietnamese takeout at a studio run by an Apache. Trudell appeared early all of a sudden. He was a slight man, dressed in jeans, t-shirt and vest with sunglasses, looking like the rock star he was.

After a rushed meal I asked if he wanted to go out for a smoke. We sat in the shade making small talk. I told him how much I liked *Baby Boom Che*, his song about Elvis Presley. I asked him about his thoughts about the previous night's election. “It doesn't matter who they elect, the system's not going to change” was all he had to say. Just before our interview I asked him if he could take off the glasses. He refused, stating, “You don't want to look into these eyes.”

Trudell was born in Omaha, Nebraska, on February 15, 1946. He grew up near the Santee Sioux reservation. He enlisted in the US Navy at 17 and served on a frigate off the coast of Vietnam. After his discharge, he studied radio and communications at a community college in San Bernardino. In 1969, he became the spokesperson of the United Indians of All Tribes' occupation of Alcatraz Island in the San Francisco Bay, helping run the group's Radio Free Alcatraz. It was there that he gained international attention as one of the

most eloquent voices from Indian Country.

A few years later, Trudell joined the American Indian Movement, and soon after, became its national chairman from 1973 to 1979. Trudell burned the US flag on the steps of the FBI building in Washington, DC, during a protest in 1979. The following night, on the Shoshone-Paiute reservation in Nevada, his home burned to the ground with his pregnant wife, three children and mother-in-law trapped inside. Only his father-in-law survived the blaze. Many claimed that the suspicious fire was an attempt to silence him.

His friend Kris Kristofferson sang of Trudell in the 1995 song *Johnny Lobo*:

*In a darkened corner of a tavern
Burning down old memories again
Johnny Lobo stares into the smoke and
dream of clouds
Running like wild horses with the wind
Holy phoenix rising from the ashes
Into the circle of the sun
Johnny Lobo's warrior heart was bur-
nished in the embers
And the battle's just begun*

After the loss of his family, Trudell wandered through the US and Canada with a friend. He started writing poetry. “They're called poems,” he said, “but they're not. They're lines for me to hang on to.”

Soon after he started working with Kiowa guitarist Jesse Ed Davis on a series of albums. The second was *AKA Grafitti Man* (1992), which Bob Dylan hailed as the best album of the year, playing it before his audiences while on a tour. Trudell went on to release many more records. One of them, *Bone Days* (2001), was produced by a certain Angelina Jolie,

glasses.

He refused, stating, “You don’t want to look into these eyes.”

the daughter of Trudell's then partner, Marcheline Bertrand.

Throughout this time Trudell remained active, speaking at events regarding Indigenous rights, the nuclear industry and the environment. He also appeared in several films – as the radio deejay in *Smoke Signals* (“*It’s a good day to be Indigenous...*”) and the militant fugitive in *Thunderheart*. He was also the subject of the 2005 documentary *Trudell*.

Trudell came out with three books of his “lines” from 1982 to 2008, the last titled *Lines From a Mined Mind*.

Kris Kristofferson wrote about another friend, Johnny Cash, in the song *The Pilgrim*, and its lyrics ring true about Trudell:

*He's a poet, oh, he's a picker,
he's a prophet, he's a pusher,
he's a pilgrim and a preacher,
and a problem when he's stoned,
he's a walkin' contradiction,
partly truth, partly fiction...*

Trudell was called a militant, poet, warrior, artist, philosopher and prophet by scores of people. One thing he was never called was a walking contradiction, partly truth and partly fiction.

Trudell was a fiery and brutally honest speaker. His eloquent and dangerous voice fell silent on December 8, 2015 at his home in Santa Clara County, California.



Backyard skating

A timely how-to guide to building the perfect home rink

Book Review by Lyle Stewart

For many of us in the Northern Hemisphere, play during the cold months meant a makeshift patch of ice wherever one could find it. A pond or a lake and a shovel would suffice. If you lived close to a town's outdoor rink, even better – if it was maintained.

Best of all, however, are the parents who invested time and effort – and a few bucks – building a backyard rink. These were more often cleared of snow, resurfaced, and, best of all, often offered a free cup of hot chocolate and a warm place to change.

New Hampshire writer Joe Proulx has been skating behind his house ever since his dad built him a rink 35 years ago. He has since graduated to building his own – big time. In *Backyard Ice Rink: A Step-by-Step Guide for Building Your Own Hockey Rink at Home* (\$25.95, The Countryman Press), Proulx explains how he helped turn makeshift experience into a professional career.

But he also does it for the romance, the generational

handing down of knowledge that good parents everywhere provide.

“A few months after my father died, I spent a night clearing a recent snowfall and resurfacing the rink with the garden hose,” Proulx writes. “Orion twinkled on my right wing, the Sea of Tranquility on my left. The only sounds were the soft trickle of the water as it spread across the ice and an occasional bass note from an expansion crack. Looking up at the sky, I imagined my father gazing down and smiling. I wiped a tear off my cheek.”

Proulx offers detailed plans to help you get your kids skating and passing and sweating every day. Before long, your little Ovechkin or Pacioretti will be skating circles around you. Most of all, they'll be having healthy fun during a season that encourages people to be couch potatoes in front of the TV or game system.

Depending on the availability of some scrap lumber, most people will have to spend a few bucks and invest some sweat equity before turning on the hose. But there's a wide variety

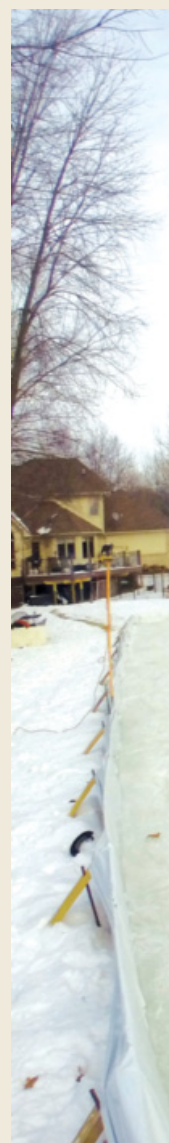
of investment plans for this winter project.

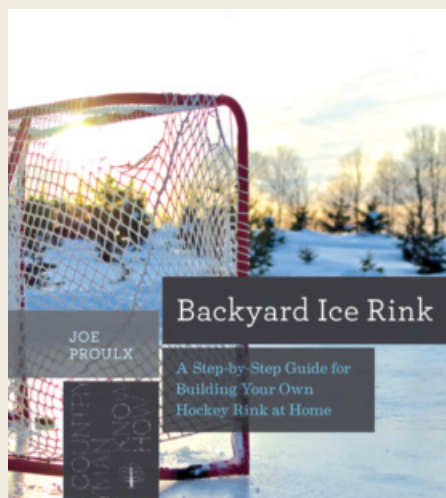
You can get skating for as little as a \$300 investment, though you may have to suffer a few neighbourly insults on your basic design of pressboard and stakes that give you boards a foot high. Then, again, you can just fire back a slap shot over the backyard fence if you take offence.

If you don't want to do much work, prepare to pay more, a lot more.

The Nicerink system, for instance, doesn't require any wood or nails. Its “boards” are composed of white thermoformed plastic, triangular brackets and a yellow foam bumper cap. All you need to put it together is a dead blow hammer. But it can be a more expensive than the traditional backyard rinks, with materials and shipping running upwards of \$2000.

In between, Proulx offers advice and a practical how-to guide for every kind of rink you may think of to get you practicing your dangle everyday until spring.





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Forgotten treasures

Compilation featuring Cree music legends tapped for Grammy nomination

by Joel Barde



The next Grammy Awards gala will see an album featuring a number of Cree and Indigenous artists from Canada competing in the Best Historical Album category.

Mistissini's own Willie Mitchell is featured on *Native North America, Vol. 1*, an album of songs by Indigenous rockers from the 1960s, '70s, and '80s. Seattle-based Light In The Attic Records – which specializes in uncovering hidden gems that never received the attention they deserved when they were first released – produced the album this year.

The album features a number of Cree artists, including Morley Loon, Lloyd Cheechoo, Lawrence Martin, Ernest Monias and Brian Davey.

It is offered in CD and vinyl, and comes with a book of artist photos and interviews, lyrics and write-ups.

"It's remarkably well done. I really don't think they could have put it together any better," said Mitchell (who is Algonquin) when reached by phone from Mistissini, where he moved for love in the 1970s.

Mitchell's heartfelt music stands out on the record. His soulful, vulnerable voice and lyrics channel Bob Dylan and express a reverence for nature and animals.

The album features two of his songs. One of them, *Call of the Moose*, was inspired by an annual "moose parade" that took place in Val-d'Or in which non-Indigenous hunters would strap moose heads to their vehicles and drive them through town.

Mitchell says he was disgusted by what he saw, especially after he followed some of the hunters to the local dump, where they rolled the heads and parts of the carcasses into a large pit.

"What they did was so disrespectful," said Mitchell, who translated his anger into a powerful song that communicates a deep-seated spiritual connection with the animal world and frustration with environmental degradation.

Mitchell still makes music and is hoping to do some more recording. He says getting music recorded and out to a wider audience has always been a challenge, something he bluntly blames on racism in the industry. And that, he says, hasn't really changed.

"The only place Aboriginal artists get played is on the CBC," Mitchell said.

But good music has a way of finding an audience. And when a Vancouverite named Kevin Howes stumbled upon a 1981 album recorded in Val-d'Or featuring three songs by Mitchell, he knew he'd found something special.

"Wilie's music really reached up and touched my soul when I first heard it," said Howes.

Howes is a true music nut, a DJ who has been collecting records for over 15 years, often hitting the road and digging through crates in thrift stores for long-lost gems.

Over the years, Howes began to collect more and more Aboriginal folk and garage rock. Impressed with its quality and wanting to get it out to a wider audience, he pitched the idea of putting together a compilation for Light in the Attic Records. After giving it a listen, they immediately bit.

A second volume of *Native American Music* is already in the works, and the prestigious indie-record label is readying a re-issue of an all-Cree record by Morley Loon at the end of 2016.

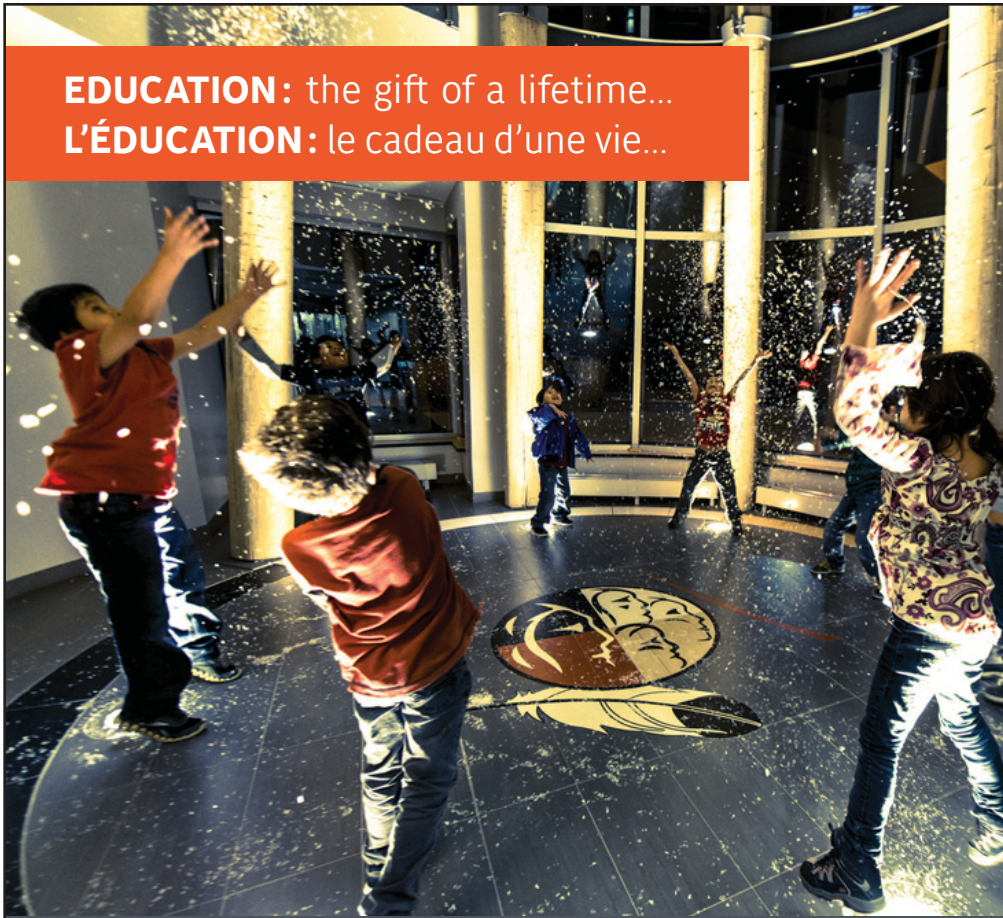
Howes says Native American music resonates with a wide audience of music lovers these days. He says the themes the songs touch on, like respect for the environment and connecting with one's roots, are moving and still contemporary.

In addition to the Grammy nomination, *Native North America* received tons of media coverage from all the major music magazines and international newspapers. The reviews are uniformly positive, with Britain's *The Guardian* calling it "a goldmine of forgotten fusions."

But according to Howes, the biggest thrill has been giving the compilation to featured artists. "To me that is the ultimate victory."



Lloyd Cheechoo



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Building for the future

Off-reserve Native social housing discussed at recent conference

by Jesse Staniforth

The figures that Edith Cloutier presented were impressive – 50% of Quebec's Aboriginal peoples now live outside of Indigenous communities, often in southern cities. In Val-d'Or, where Cloutier is director of the Native Friendship Centre, the Indigenous population exploded by 270% between 2001 and 2006. Clearly, off-reserve housing is a pressing issue for Indigenous advocates to address.

Those numbers go a long way toward explaining why, on December 9, the 19th Annual Public Health Days conference at Montreal's Bonaventure Hotel held a day-long session on the issue of Aboriginal housing. Chaired by Philippe Tsaronsere Meilleur, executive director of the Montreal Native Community Development Centre, the session heard from a wide variety of speakers, including Lawrence Katapatuk, Regional Housing Planner for the Cree Nation Government, as well as representatives for the Makivik Corporation and several social scientists.

Speaking to *the Nation*, Meilleur explained that his organization was pushing for a Montreal-specific Aboriginal housing strategy.

"If a person is moving down here from communities up north, they'd be looking at nothing much," Meilleur said. "There's some social housing open to everybody, but there's not a lot of Aboriginally tagged social housing. We're looking at temporary housing within our friendship centre – that we would build, eventually. Most people come down for healthcare reasons and visit hospitals. We'd like to offer an Aboriginal and culturally secure environment for them, where there would also be services provided by Aboriginal people."

Meilleur explained that there is no place at present where Aboriginal people can find all the services they need in one location. Because Montreal's Native Friendship Centre is open to people of all Nations, living in Montreal or passing through, it serves a huge variety of populations.

"They might be Cree, Inuit or other Nations, but they could choose to go through our system," he imagined of a future housing plan. "That's what we want to design – something that's more involving, where people aren't



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PEOPLE LEAVE THE COMMUNITY BECAUSE THEY HAVE NO PLACE TO LIVE. THEN THEY ARRIVE IN THE CITY, WHERE THEY'RE CONFRONTED WITH DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM, AND DISCOVER A SHORTAGE OF AVAILABLE HOUSING. WE'VE STRUGGLED WITH THIS PROBLEM FOR NEARLY SEVEN YEARS. AND THEN THE CRISIS HAPPENED IN OCTOBER."

But to get a project off the ground requires an enormous amount of work to secure funding from provincial, federal, municipal and private sources.

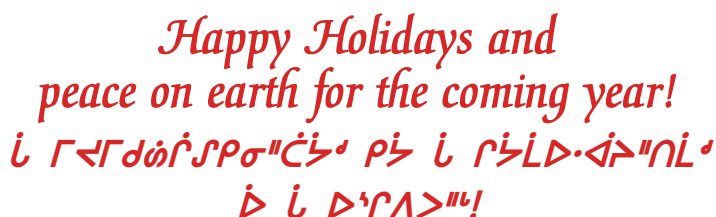
Speaking about Val-d'Or's Kitjaté project, Edith Cloutier told *the Nation* that this undertaking has been a long time coming, and it reflects a genuine need in the community.

Former Val-d'Or mayor Fernand Trahan was a staunch opponent of the project, Cloutier stated. He believed that social housing needed to be open to everyone, whether they were Aboriginal or not. For Trahan, the notion of a 100% Aboriginal social housing development was distasteful and discriminatory – a claim that Cloutier asked the Quebec Human Rights Commission to measure.

Luckily, Trahan was succeeded by Pierre Corbeil, who Cloutier says is much more supportive of the idea. But by mid-2015, the project had been under discussion for six years with little concrete progress. Meanwhile, people needed homes.

Following the allegations that SQ officers have been abusing Indigenous women in Val-d'Or, the Couillard government pledged \$5.1 million for the Kitjaté project, which means that finally the idea will become a reality.

“We will be sending out a call for tenders very soon, and hope to identify the general contractor in the spring,” said Cloutier. “We need to break ground in the spring, because we don’t want to be doing construction in the winter. It’s going to take another year, before we can have 24 families move in in August 2017. By then we’ll be in our eighth year. But it’s now more than just a dream – it’s way beyond that.”



www.nationnews.ca December 25, 2015 *the Nation* 31

Justin times for Christmas

by Sonny Orr



In old movies, whenever you hear background sounds and talking, the audio is almost always faked to enhance the effect of the visual art of the film. One such sound was the crowded room background, people talking to each other, just out of range and just indiscernible enough to convince you that there were people talking in the background. That was usually the walla sound effect. It literally was the overdubbing of several people saying walla walla walla over and over again. Depending on the scene, the walla walla walla would either intensify or subtly hint at laughter or other tones.

During the Harper years, the walla effect was overlaid with ominously urgent and downright disturbing. Today the background walla walla walla is more a warble warble sound. The sound of cooing, oohing and ahing over Justin Trudeau, the world's sexiest leader. What more could a country want for Christmas?! I feel so good about Justin that I feel like giving blood for science and humanity. With Harper, it always felt like he was out for my blood.

Because of the World Environment Day's 2015 slogan (Seven Billion Dreams. One Planet. Consume With Care), the world realized that hey, the world doesn't have to be so hard on itself, take it easy and quit smoking smog and let up on the contribution to world climate changes. Sell some air to China, instead of iron ore wrought from corruption and deception. Once I told an elderly man that soon we should sell air to China. He scoffed. But hey, we have clean water and air, so let's keep it that way.

With this new government, the old oppressive ways seem to be sliding away quickly. Take the legalizing of marijuana. In one fell swoop, crime decreased because the potential of five million people are now law-abiding citizens. This releases the police to work on real crimes, like missing and murdered people. The income and taxes from the existing market could probably eliminate or alleviate greatly the deficits of the country that is bankrupting itself by maintaining such archaic laws. The liquor boards are already bidding to be the main dis-

tributors as their network is far and reaching. Most likely you will see changes, mainly for the better, not even mentioning the medical contributions and savings.

The issues of residential schools and the legacy of sorrows were met with dignity, humility and honour by our infallible leader. This is respect indeed from one who has traversed this great nation and understands the country and its peoples and not with just its financial interests in mind. Hopefully, racism will lessen and be cast aside for information, teachings, understandings, compassions and the comradery required to get and honest job done.

I could warble on and on about Justin, but what I see and hear, I like. I haven't liked a leader this much in my life. I must be getting soft or wishy washy or maybe it's the upcoming holidays and festivities. Anyhoo, I wish you all the best for these holidays. Don't slip on icy sidewalks or drive too quickly through blinding snowstorms, just take it easy when you can!

***With the renewal of an upcoming
New Year, we wish good tidings and
prosperity to all in Eeyou Istchee.***

***From Chief & Council
and the Cree Nation of Wemindji Administration***





We wish Mrs. Lacasse the best of success in her new role.





Don't be fooled by hate

by Xavier Kataquapit

Recently, I have heard a lot of comments on the fact that we are welcoming many refugees from Syria. This topic is very popular in coffee shops and any other place where people meet throughout Canada. Sadly, I hear a lot of mean comments and even hatred from people and that disappoints me.

I am not really surprised at these negative comments about the arrival of refugees from Syria as I have heard nasty chatting about First Nation people like myself for many years. When right-wing governments and organizations want to stir up trouble they always resort to pushing hate buttons on topics that turn normally nice people into hatemongers. The sad part is that this actually works to a great degree.

However, thankfully, most Canadians see through this fanning of hate and remain open, tolerant and kind. We all live in a wonderful country and we are lucky to have such a great democracy where people can live safe and productive lives. The thing is that we have to stand up to hatred and intolerance when we see it rise up because that kind of sentiment really leads to allowing governments and powerful rightwing organizations to take us all down a path to fascism. I don't think most of us would want to go in that direction.

I have seen over the years that when governments want to divert attention from their own bad deeds, they point the finger at the most vulnerable in society, those who have a difficult time fighting back. I have watched mean-spirited governments focus blame and negative comments on the poor, the mentally ill, drug-addicted persons, non-white cultures and, of course, First Nation people. When you do a little research you learn that these same governments and organizations are terrible at running provinces or countries and actually have put Canada in a very negative situation in terms of debt, not to mention their countless corruption issues.

For too many years I have watched while our governments make life better for the wealthy on the backs of the middle class and poor. I feel guilty that we have allowed our governments to bomb people in far-off countries and that has resulted in the deaths and

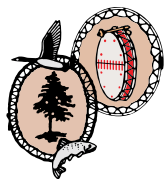
injuries of thousands upon thousands. Did we all have blinders on? Was there some strange reason that we stood by and allowed things to go so terribly wrong in this world and our country? Why have so many of us joined the hate bandwagon?

We must all realize that the Syrian refugees who are coming to Canada are leaving their country because we and many other countries have been bombing the heck out of Syria for some time now. Syrian cities and towns are being demolished, infrastructure and hospitals have been destroyed and there are few safe places for people to live. I commend Justin Trudeau and the Liberals and also the opposition NDP for pulling away from war and providing a safe place for Syrian refugees to settle.

We need to keep Canada a democracy that is open, peace loving and committed to making the world a better place. I fear that if we get lazy with this mission then we will pay for it. As a matter of fact it will be our future generations who will pay for it, as they may have to live in a world that is full of hatred, intolerance and violence. We should be dedicating our best efforts to assisting other less fortunate countries in achieving a better quality of life and safety. That way we would be helping them to create an environment that they would not want to run away from. Just because we want their resources and we are prepared to take them by violent means does not mean we are right in doing so. Might is not right.

I appeal to my First Nation family and friends across the country to keep strong and stand tall for a better world, our waters, land and people all over this Mother Earth. I also appeal to everyone else to remember that they also come from origins of refugees. Most people who immigrated to Canada did so because they wanted a better life and to develop a democratic, free and safe place for their families.

We are all refugees in one way or another and we should keep that in mind before condemning the Syrian children, mothers, fathers and grandparents. If you believe in any religion on this earth and in the goodness of humanity, then it is important to remember that hatred is evil. We are better than that.



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